



Service Quality in Pub Restaurants: Insights from a South African Township

Abstract

William T. S. MAHLANGU 
South African Revenue Service, South
Africa, Email, Wtsmahlangu@gmail.com
Corresponding Author

Joseph Robert ROBERSON 
Hospitality Management, Tshwane
University of Technology, South Africa,
Email, Robersonjr@tut.ac.za

Antonie Johan SMITH 
Electrical Engineering, Tshwane
University of Technology, South Africa,
Smithaj@tut.ac.za

This study explores customers' perceptions of service quality at a selected pub restaurant in Mamelodi, prompted by concerns over its relative underperformance compared to local competitors. Using a quantitative and descriptive approach, data was collected through self-administered questionnaires, employing the SERVPERF model for a detailed analysis. The results reveal several strengths, including convenient operating hours, modern equipment, and appealing physical facilities. However, it also identifies critical areas for improvement, particularly in staff attire and the design of menus and pamphlets. A significant finding is the strong association between customers' educational levels and their perceptions of tangibility and responsiveness in service quality, highlighting the influence of socio-demographic factors. The study's implications are central to enhancing service quality, with a key recommendation to establish a prescribed uniform policy to improve staff presentation. This recommendation is vital not only for enhancing the establishment's aesthetic appeal but also for reinforcing a professional image, which could lead to increased customer satisfaction. By focusing on these targeted improvements, the study provides valuable insights into optimising service delivery that is aligned with customer expectations and demographic profiles, offering a blueprint for operational excellence in the hospitality sector.

Keywords: Township economies, service quality, customer satisfaction, Mamelodi pubs, economic development

How to cite this article: Mahlangu, W.T.S., Roberson, J.R. & Smith, A.J. (2024). Service Quality in Pub Restaurants: Insights from a South African Township. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 13(4):880-888. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.575>

Introduction

South Africa faces significant unemployment challenges, with the unemployment rate peaking at 32.9% in the first quarter of 2024 (Stats SA, 2024). Township economies serve as a crucial support system for millions of South Africans who are either unemployed or seeking to create their own businesses to survive (Mazwai, 2019). Premier David Makhura recognises the potential of these economies and has embarked on several strategic initiatives to integrate the township economies into the broader national framework. A landmark effort is the Township Economic Development Act, introduced in April 2022, which aims to support township businesses through regulatory reforms, funding mechanisms, and infrastructural enhancements (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2022). This initiative is further reinforced by the establishment of the Township Economy Partnership Fund, which has allocated R850 million to aid in the growth and revitalisation of these enterprises in collaboration with the Gauteng Enterprise Propeller, Industrial Development Corporation, SA SME Fund, and Standard Bank (Business Tech Africa, 2021). Premier Makhura's commitment to directing a significant portion of provincial procurement towards (Small to Medium Enterprises) SMEs reflects a strategic focus on stimulating growth and enhancing competitiveness within township economies (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2019). These policies represent a crucial shift towards empowering township economies as independent and thriving economic entities (Daily Maverick, 2022). Despite these efforts, township economies remain largely informal, contributing around 9% to the national GDP and supporting approximately 3.5 million jobs, or 22% of total employment (Forbes Africa, 2021). However, their informal nature often excludes them from formal tax and labour regulations, creating challenges in regulatory compliance and worker protection (World Bank Group, 2014). Nonetheless, ongoing infrastructural improvements and the development of commercial hubs are increasingly making townships attractive for both business and residential purposes (Heer, 2018). This evolving landscape highlights the critical need to nurture self-sustainable small businesses within township economies as a means to address the severe unemployment crisis effectively, particularly in the retail sector, which dominates the informal economy.

The study explores consumer dynamics within a pub in Mamelodi, highlighting the crucial role such establishments play in driving economic vitality and addressing societal challenges. A direct link between service quality and business success is evident, underscoring the need to understand customer preferences and behaviours for the prosperity of township enterprises (Botha, 2017; Simelane, 2023; Unuvar & Kaya, 2016). This research quantitatively evaluates the impact of customer service quality on the economic resilience of a township pub, with broader implications for township economies as a whole (Nicolaidis, 2023). One key recommendation from the study is the implementation of a prescribed uniform policy to enhance staff presentation, a critical area identified for improvement. This recommendation is vital not only for improving the establishment's aesthetic appeal but also for reinforcing a professional image, thereby potentially boosting overall customer satisfaction. By focusing on these improvements, the study offers valuable insights into optimising service delivery tailored to customer expectations and demographic profiles, providing a blueprint for operational excellence in the hospitality sector. The study recommends targeted staff training to improve responsiveness and empathy, enhance service quality and encourage repeat patronage (Edlins & Dolamore, 2018; Kataoka et al., 2019). Upgrading menu and pamphlet designs can also improve customer perceptions of the establishment's professionalism and attention to detail (Wu & Kim, 2014). Additionally, the study finds a



significant link between customers' educational levels and their perceptions of tangibility and responsiveness, highlighting the importance of tailoring services to diverse clientele (Kundi et al., 2014; Labita & Prado, 2021). By addressing these areas, the establishment can boost customer satisfaction and loyalty, contributing to the economic resilience of township economies.

Literature review

Township economies in South Africa have undergone significant transformations since the end of apartheid, becoming vibrant centres of culture and commerce while still facing challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, persistent inequality, and the legacy of historical oppression (Hart, 2024). The hospitality sector, particularly pub restaurants, serves as an important context for examining service quality and customer perceptions in these communities (Nethengwe et al., 2018). Service quality in township establishments is more than just efficient service delivery; it reflects the socio-economic realities and cultural diversity of these areas, with implications for economic empowerment, community development, and social cohesion (Mncube et al., 2023; Mtati, 2023). Understanding customer perceptions of service quality in these settings requires a nuanced approach that considers the unique characteristics of township economies and the varied needs of their residents (Charman et al., 2012; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2017; Scheba & Turok, 2020). Effective management of service quality in township pubs involves mastering concepts integral to quality differentiation strategies and ensuring precise definitions of quality constructs (Getty & Thompson, 1994). In this research, service quality is defined as the extent to which a service meets customer expectations and needs, creating a positive impression and evaluation of the service (Johns, 1992; Lewis, 1993; Nicolaides, 2012; Nicolaides, 2023). Township economies are deeply rooted in South Africa's historical context, having been shaped by apartheid-era policies. Despite efforts to improve living conditions post-apartheid, these areas continue to face significant socio-economic challenges, including high population density, informality, poverty, and crime. Research highlights that township businesses are predominantly micro-enterprises focused on grocery, food, and liquor services, with limited integration into broader value chains (Bvuma & Marnewick, 2021; Ngwenya & Zikhali, 2018). Barriers such as restricted access to land, deficient infrastructure, and limited market access hinder the growth and formalisation of these businesses (Guliwe & Bulelwa, 2023; Wiid & Cant, 2021). Despite these challenges, there is evidence of entrepreneurial resilience within township economies, suggesting potential for growth. However, current investments often yield only temporary benefits, underscoring the need for a comprehensive strategy to remove systemic obstacles and create a business-friendly environment (Nicolaides, 2023; Muzekenyi et al., 2023). This includes regulatory reforms, infrastructure improvements, skill development initiatives, and tailored support for enterprise growth. Addressing these issues is crucial for unlocking the full economic and social value of township economies and integrating them into the national economic framework (Msimango-Galawe, 2022). Post-apartheid urban policy reforms have aimed to address spatial segregation and inequality, but their effectiveness has been limited by various factors, including policy distortions and implementation challenges. The persistence of socio-spatial divisions highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of South Africa's urban landscape and the critical role of urban policy in shaping the future of its cities. This study contributes to the discourse by analysing customer perceptions of service quality in a Mamelodi pub restaurant, using the SERVPERF model to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The insights gained offer actionable recommendations for enhancing service quality, thereby supporting the socio-economic development of township economies.

Methodological approach for assessing service quality in pub restaurants

In the growing hospitality sector of South Africa, particularly within township contexts like Mamelodi, pub restaurants play a crucial role in driving service and tourism industries (Eresia-Eke et al., 2020). These establishments are not only essential for generating income, employment, and economic diversification, but they also offer significant social support in areas facing high unemployment and various social challenges (Roberson, 2014; Unuvar & Kaya, 2016). The sustainability and success of these enterprises are heavily dependent on the quality of customer service provided, especially in competitive township settings where customer expectations are diverse (Eresia-Eke et al., 2020; Nicolaides, 2012). This study adopts a positivist philosophy, asserting that an objective reality can be empirically observed and quantified (Bryman, 2016). A deductive approach is employed, aiming to measure service quality within township pub restaurants based on established theories and models in the hospitality sector (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The research strategy involves a survey chosen for its effectiveness in collecting extensive quantitative data from a large sample of customers (Saunders et al., 2019). This method provides a comprehensive overview of customer perceptions regarding service quality, ensuring statistically significant and generalisable findings within the context of township pub restaurants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A mono-method quantitative approach is adopted, allowing for a focused examination of the study's phenomenon and enabling straightforward data analysis and interpretation (Bryman, 2016). This approach aligns with the study's positivist underpinnings, favouring quantitative measures for their objectivity and precision (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study employs a cross-sectional time horizon, capturing data at a single point in time to provide a snapshot of customer perceptions of service quality in township pub restaurants. This temporal approach is well-suited to the study's objectives, providing immediate insights while laying the groundwork for future research (Saunders et al., 2019).

Convenience sampling was utilised for its practicality and efficiency in reaching a readily available subset of the population (Saunders et al., 2019). This technique suits the exploratory nature of the study, enabling quick data collection from customers who are accessible and willing to participate (Bryman, 2016). The sample size was determined based on statistical considerations, balancing the need for robust analysis with the limitations of convenience sampling (Saunders et al., 2019). The population consisted of customers from a pub restaurant in Mamelodi, with a sample size of 150. Ultimately, 107 valid



responses were obtained, representing a response rate of 71.33%. A response rate of 71.33% may introduce bias if non-respondents differ significantly from respondents, potentially affecting the generalizability of the study's findings. According to Saunders et al. (2019), higher response rates are essential for ensuring the reliability of quantitative research, as lower rates can lead to non-response bias, which can skew the data and influence conclusions. The primary data collection instrument was a self-administered structured questionnaire developed based on the SERVPERF model (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). This model was selected for its empirical validation and broad acceptance as a reliable framework for assessing service quality across various dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The questionnaire included 22 item statements across five service dimensions, rated on a 7-point Likert scale, to capture nuanced customer perceptions of service quality. Demographic questions were also included to contextualise responses and identify variations in service quality perceptions (Saunders et al., 2019). A pilot study was conducted before the main data collection to ensure the questionnaire's clarity, comprehensibility, and reliability, which is crucial for refining the instrument and enhancing the validity of the study's findings (Bryman, 2016). Data analysis was conducted using STATA and SPSS, allowing for rigorous statistical examination of the collected data (Saunders et al., 2019). Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were calculated to evaluate customer perceptions of service quality. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also used to determine significant differences between groups. Ethical considerations were rigorously adhered to, following Tshwane University of Technology's guidelines to ensure participant dignity, informed consent, and data confidentiality. All participants were informed of the research's purpose, and explicit consent was obtained. Confidentiality of the provided information was strictly maintained, with necessary permissions sought where required.

Results

This section presents the findings from the analysis of data collected from 107 respondents. The analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25, adhering to the structured approach recommended by Aldrich, (2018), who emphasises that raw data becomes meaningful only when it is systematically organised and interpreted.

Descriptive findings

Among the respondents, a majority (57.94%) were male, while females constituted 42.06% of the sample. Although the survey included an option for non-binary gender identity, it was not selected by any participants. The age distribution revealed that the largest group of respondents (43.93%) fell within the 26 to 35-year-old range, followed by those aged 36 to 45 years (29.90%). Younger participants aged 18 to 25 accounted for 15.89% of the respondents, while those aged 46 to 55 represented 10.28%. Notably, there were no participants over the age of 55. In terms of educational attainment, the most common qualification among respondents was a matric certificate (NQF4), held by 51.4% of participants. This was followed by those with a national certificate (NQF5) at 22.45% and those with an NQF6 qualification at 11.21%. Both NQF7 degrees and post-graduate NQF8 qualifications were represented equally, at 6.54% each. A small proportion of respondents (1.86%) reported having a master's degree, which was the highest educational level noted in the survey. No respondents selected the "other" category for their educational level. Regarding employment status, nearly half of the respondents (47.66%) were employed, while 38.32% identified as unemployed, and 14.02% were self-employed. Interestingly, there were no retired individuals among the respondents, and the "other" option for employment status was not selected. The primary reason for visiting the pub restaurant was for leisure and enjoyment, as indicated by 58.88% of respondents. Social meetings were the next most common reason (20.56%), followed by networking (19.63%). A small minority (0.93%) visited the pub restaurant for business meetings, and no respondents chose the "other" option for their reason.

SERVPERF service quality dimensions

The second part of the questionnaire was structured around the SERVPERF model, encompassing 22 questions that were distributed across the five dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These questions employed a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with intermediate points for disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, and agree. The results presented in this section are derived from the analysis of responses provided by the 107 participants. To evaluate the reliability of the data collected, the 22 variables from the questionnaire were subjected to a reliability analysis. The results, summarised in Table 1, demonstrated a high level of reliability, with the overall Cronbach's Alpha calculated at $\alpha=0.9884$, indicating excellent internal consistency across the scale. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency, which indicates how closely related a set of items are as a group. It is expressed as:

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{c}} \quad (1)$$

Where N is the number of items, \bar{c} is the average covariance between item pairs, and \bar{v} is the average variance. In practice, Cronbach's Alpha was implemented by calculating the average covariance among the items and comparing it to the total variance, adjusted for the number of items in the scale. A high Cronbach's Alpha value (typically above 0.7) suggests that the items measure the same underlying construct and, therefore, have good internal consistency. In addition to the overall reliability, the reliability of each SERVPERF dimension was independently assessed. As detailed in Table 1, all constructs achieved



Cronbach’s alpha values above 0.8 and 0.9, which signifies good to excellent reliability across the different dimensions of the SERVPERF model.

Table 1: Cronbach’s Alpha results

Factor	Number of Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha	Reliability
Tangibles	4	0.8880	Good
Reliability	5	0.9725	Excellent
Responsiveness	4	0.9865	Excellent
Assurance	4	0.9833	Excellent
Empathy	5	0.9620	Excellent
Overall Score	22	0.9884	Excellent

Tangibles perceptions

The survey included four critical questions to gauge participants' perceptions of the pub restaurant's physical characteristics, as depicted in Figure 1. The results indicate that the establishment's tangible aspects are generally perceived favourably. The strongest consensus emerged regarding the modernity of the equipment (Q1), with 44.86% of respondents strongly agreeing. Similarly, 42.99% of participants strongly agreed that the amenities, including furniture and audio-visual equipment, were visually appealing (Q2). However, the agreement was less pronounced when evaluating the staff's appearance (Q3) and the visual appeal of pamphlets and menus (Q4), with only 27.1% and 28.04% of respondents, respectively, expressing strong agreement. Despite the lower percentage of strong agreement, most participants still agreed with the statements concerning staff presentation and the visual appeal of the printed materials. Nevertheless, these aspects also had the highest levels of disagreement.

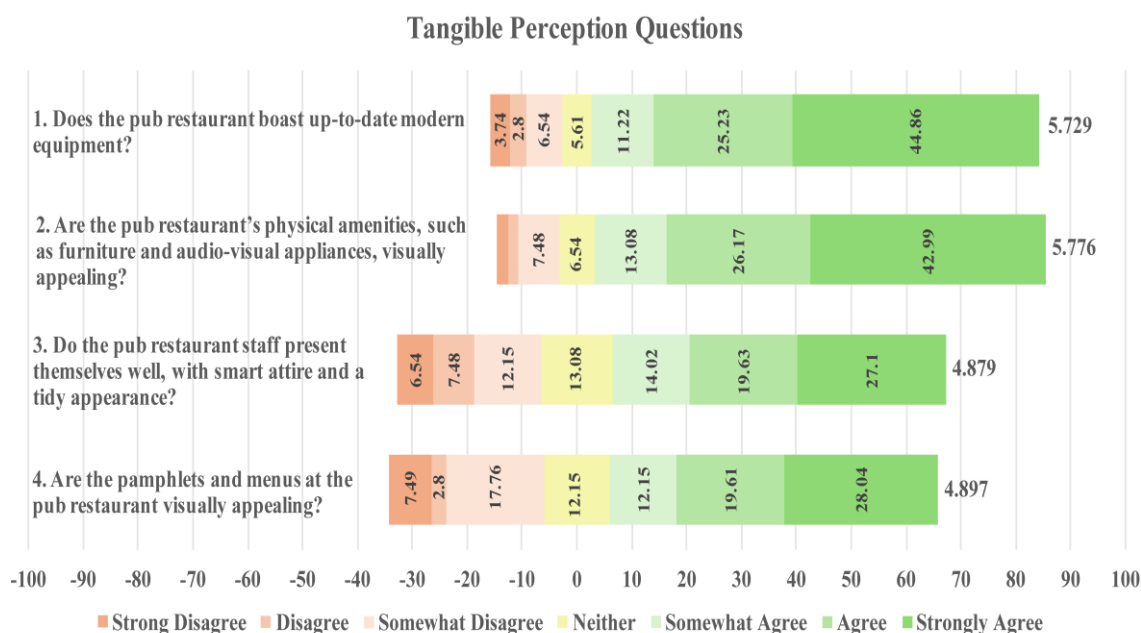


Figure 1: Tangible perception questions

On average, the visual appeal of the restaurant's physical amenities garnered the highest ratings, with a mean score of 5.776, reflecting strong agreement. Conversely, the staff's presentation received the lowest mean score of 4.879, indicating comparatively lower satisfaction in this area. Overall, the tangible dimension achieved a mean score of 5.320, suggesting that participants generally hold a positive view of the restaurant’s physical attributes.

Reliability perceptions

The survey assessed participants' perceptions of the pub restaurant's reliability through five statements, as shown in Figure 2. The findings reveal a strong consensus regarding the establishment's reliability, with over 50% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement. The highest levels of agreement were noted for the timely delivery of orders (Q8), where 64.48% of respondents strongly agreed. This was closely followed by the restaurant's commitment to resolving customer issues (Q6), with 62.62% of participants strongly agreeing. Statements related to the dependability of service (Q7) and adherence to promises (Q5) both received an equal level of agreement, with 59.81% of respondents strongly agreeing. The accuracy of record-keeping (Q9) had the lowest level of strong agreement, but it still maintained an overall agreement rate of 57.94%. On average, the pub restaurant's ability to deliver orders on time received the highest mean score of 5.570, indicating strong customer agreement. In contrast, the accuracy of record-keeping received the lowest mean score of 5.196, reflecting slightly less consensus among customers regarding this aspect compared to others. The overall domain mean score for reliability was 5.393, suggesting a generally positive perception of the pub restaurant's reliability.



Reliability Perception Questions

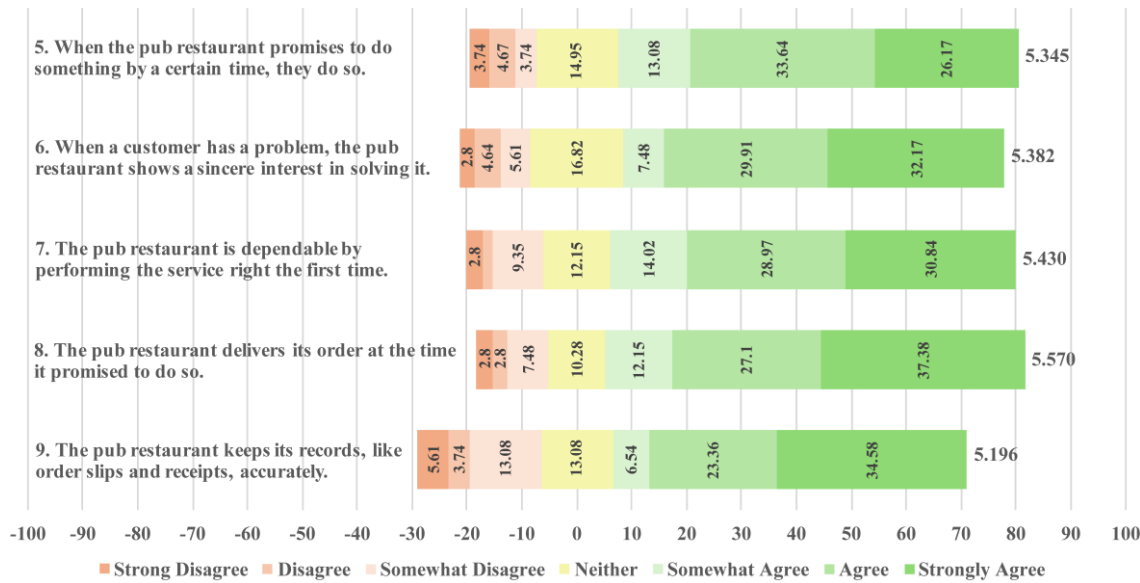


Figure 2: Reliability perception questions

Responsiveness perceptions

The assessment of responsiveness within the pub restaurant was based on four key aspects, illustrated in Figure 3. The results show a consistently positive reception across all statements, indicating that the staff were accessible, eager to assist, and provided timely service while effectively communicating delivery times. Participants exhibited the highest level of agreement with the willingness of pub restaurant employees to assist customers, as reflected in Q12 and Q13, which received mean scores of 5.458 and 5.440, respectively. This suggests that customers particularly valued the staff's readiness to help and their responsiveness to requests. The promptness of service (Q11) received the lowest mean score of 5.393, though it still indicated a high level of agreement. Overall, the domain mean score for responsiveness was 5.418, underscoring a generally positive perception of the pub restaurant's ability to efficiently respond to customer needs.

Responsiveness Perception Questions

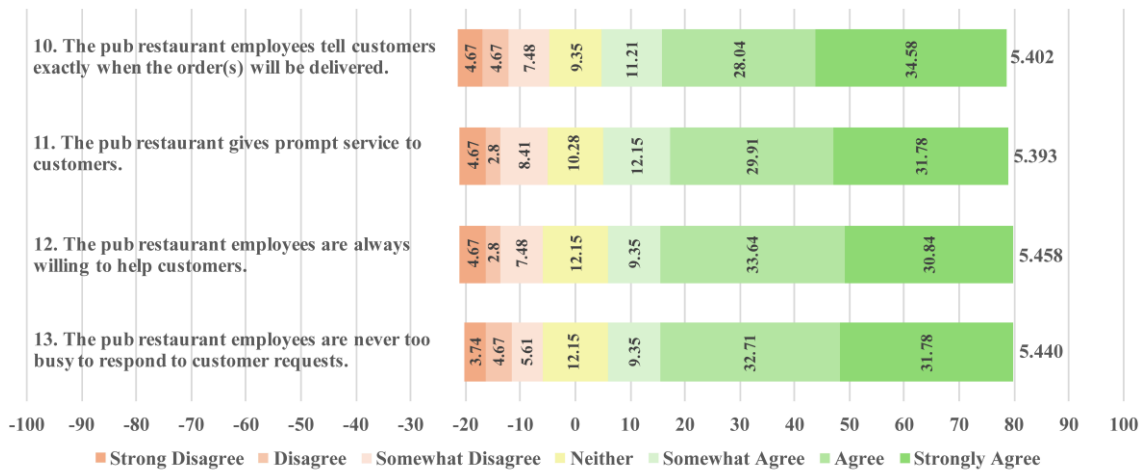


Figure 3: Responsiveness perception questions

Assurance perceptions

Participants' perceptions of assurance within the pub restaurant were measured through four key variables, depicted in Figure 4. The results show a strong consensus among customers, with substantial agreement across all aspects. The highest level of agreement was observed regarding the respectful and polite behaviour of the staff (Q16), where 37.38% of respondents strongly agreed. This was followed closely by the sense of safety in transactions (Q15), with 35.51% of participants expressing strong agreement. The courteousness of the pub restaurant employees (Q16) achieved the highest mean score of 5.524, indicating strong customer satisfaction in this area. In contrast, the sense of confidence instilled by the employees' behaviour (Q14) and the employees' knowledge in answering customer questions (Q17) had the lowest levels of strong agreement, with 30.84% each. Nonetheless, these aspects still reflected a high level of agreement.



Assurance Perception Questions

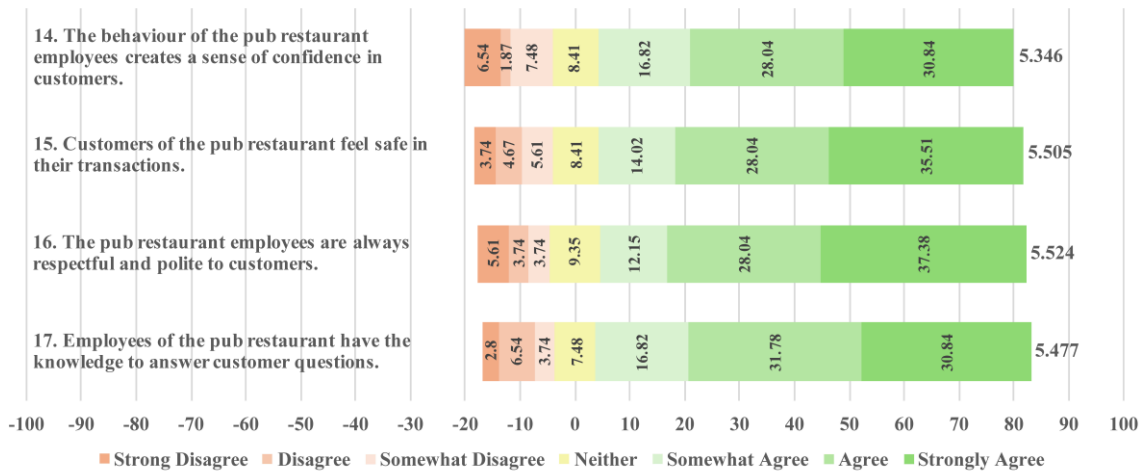


Figure 4: Assurance perception questions

Overall, the domain mean score for assurance was 5.463, highlighting a generally positive perception of the pub restaurant's ability to instil confidence and ensure customer satisfaction.

Empathy perceptions

The final dimension of the SERVPERF model, empathy, was evaluated through five key variables, as presented in Figure 5. The findings reveal that participants generally agreed with the statements assessing the pub restaurant's empathy. The highest level of agreement was recorded for the convenience of the restaurant's operating hours (Q19), with 53.27% of respondents strongly agreeing and 24.30% agreeing, culminating in an overall agreement rate of 85.05%. This suggests that customers highly value the accessibility provided by the restaurant's schedule. The consideration of customers' best interests (Q21) and the understanding of specific customer needs (Q22) also received strong agreement rates of 35.51% and 38.32%, respectively, with overall agreement rates of 63.55%. These findings suggest that customers feel the pub restaurant is attentive to their individual needs and preferences. Personal attention from employees was rated positively, with individual attention (Q18) and personal attention (Q20) receiving strong agreement from 31.78% of respondents. These consistent ratings across multiple variables underscore a generally positive perception of the restaurant's empathetic service.

Empathy Perception Questions

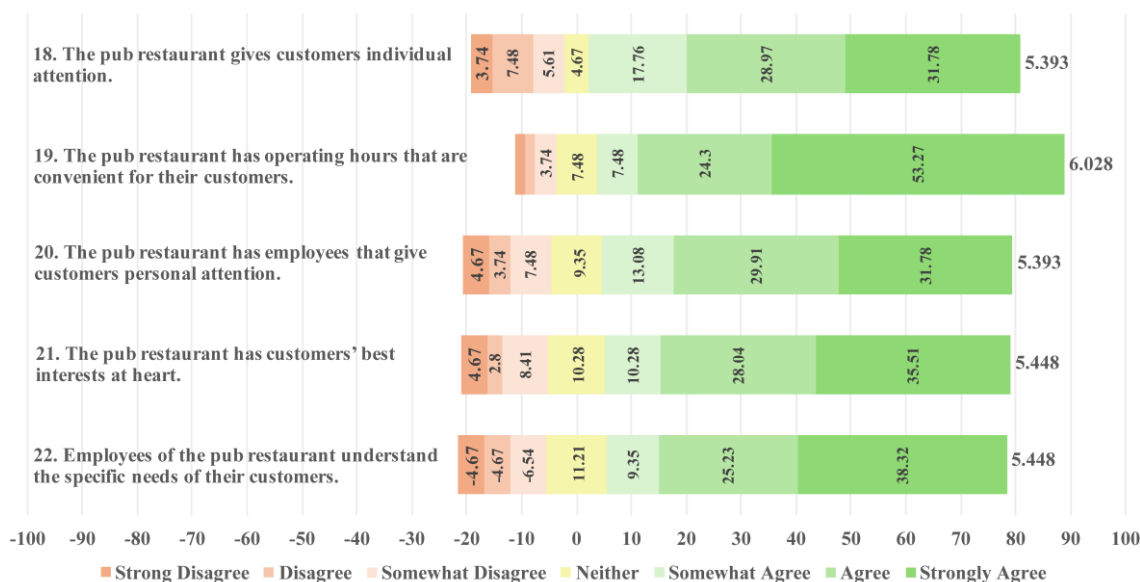


Figure 5: Empathy perception questions

Overall, the responses for the empathy construct align closely with those of the other SERVPERF model dimensions, further emphasising the pub restaurant's commitment to understanding and effectively meeting customer needs.

Comparison of SERVPERF dimensions

When comparing the average scores across the SERVPERF dimensions, as illustrated in Figure 6, empathy emerged as the highest-rated aspect, with a mean score of 5.542.

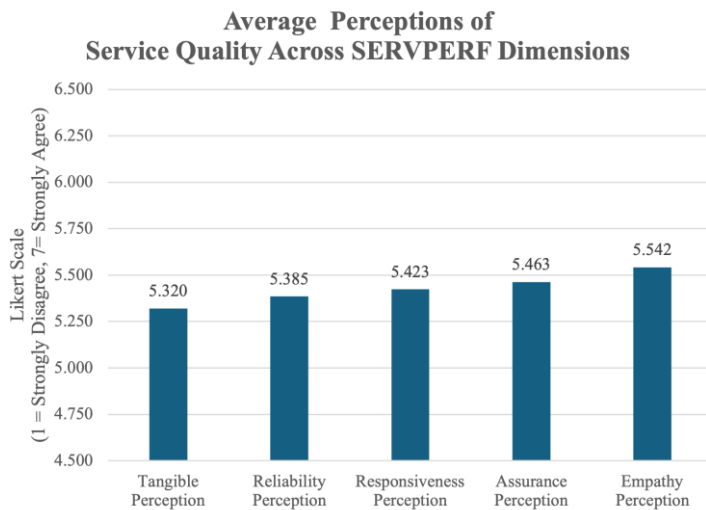


Figure 6 Average perceptions of service quality across SERVPERF dimensions

This was followed by assurance, which scored 5.463, and responsiveness, with a mean of 5.423. Reliability came next with an average score of 5.385, while tangibles were rated the lowest among the dimensions, with a mean score of 5.320. Overall, the combined mean score across all dimensions was 5.427. This score lies between "somewhat agree" and "agree" on the Likert scale, indicating a generally positive perception of service quality across the evaluated domains.

Discussion

The analysis of the collected data revealed several insightful findings about the service quality dimensions at the selected pub restaurant in Mamelodi, employing the SERVPERF model. This discussion interprets these findings in the context of existing literature and the specific dynamics of the township economy. The physical aspects of the pub restaurant received varied responses. The use of modern equipment was the highest-rated tangible aspect, with 44.86% of participants strongly agreeing that the equipment was up-to-date. This aligns with the findings by Botha (2017), who highlighted the importance of modern facilities in enhancing customer satisfaction in hospitality settings. However, the presentation of staff was rated the lowest among the tangibles, with only 27.1% strongly agreeing that the staff attire was satisfactory. This indicates a potential area for improvement, as professional staff presentation is critical for creating a positive first impression and enhancing overall service quality (Nicolaidis, 2012). The reliability dimension, which measures the ability to perform promised services dependably and accurately, showed moderate satisfaction levels. The highest agreement was observed in the timely delivery of orders, with 64.48% of participants strongly agreeing. This reflects the establishment's effectiveness in meeting time-related expectations, which is crucial for customer retention (Unuvar & Kaya, 2016). However, the accuracy of record-keeping had the lowest mean score, indicating that improvements in this area could enhance overall reliability perceptions. Accurate record-keeping is essential for maintaining trust and operational efficiency (Roberson, 2014). Responsiveness, which involves the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service, was rated positively overall. The willingness of staff to assist customers received high ratings, with 64.49% of participants agreeing. This finding is consistent with Eresia-Eke et al. (2020), who emphasised the significance of responsiveness in customer satisfaction in township businesses. However, the provision of prompt service had a slightly lower rating, suggesting that while staff are willing to help, there may be delays in service delivery. Addressing these delays can significantly improve customer perceptions of responsiveness. The assurance dimension, which includes the competence of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence, was also rated positively. The courteousness of the staff was the highest-rated aspect, with 37.38% of participants strongly agreeing. This indicates that staff behaviour contributes significantly to creating a sense of confidence among customers. However, the knowledgeability of staff received the lowest mean score within this dimension, highlighting an area for further training and development. Competent and knowledgeable staff are essential for providing high-quality service and building customer trust (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Empathy, which measures the care and individual attention provided to customers, had the highest overall mean score among the SERVPERF dimensions. Convenient operating hours were particularly appreciated, with an overall agreement rate of 85.05%. This suggests that the pub restaurant successfully meets the scheduling needs of its customers, a factor that is crucial in enhancing customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry (Simelane, 2023). Nonetheless, there is room for improvement in providing personalised attention, as indicated by the lower mean scores for individual attention and understanding specific customer needs. The study also explored the influence of socio-demographic factors on customer perceptions of service quality. A significant association was found between customers' educational levels and their perceptions of tangibility and responsiveness. This finding underscores the importance of tailoring services to meet the diverse needs of customers based on their educational backgrounds. For example, customers with higher educational qualifications may have higher expectations for service standards and may be



more critical of tangible aspects and responsiveness. This insight is supported by the work of Botha (2017), who highlighted the role of socio-demographic factors in shaping service quality perceptions.

Implications for service improvement

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance service quality at the pub restaurant. Firstly, implementing a prescribed uniform policy could improve the staff's presentation, addressing one of the critical areas for improvement. This aligns with Nicolaidis (2012), who emphasised the importance of professional attire in the hospitality industry. Secondly, targeted training programmes can enhance staff responsiveness and empathy, equipping them with the skills to provide timely and personalised service. Training is vital for improving service quality, as it helps staff understand and meet customer expectations effectively (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Upgrading the design of menus and pamphlets can also improve customers' perceptions of the establishment's tangibility. Well-designed and attractive menus reflect professionalism and attention to detail, enhancing the overall dining experience (Roberson, 2014). Additionally, addressing the gaps in staff knowledge through continuous professional development can improve the assurance dimension, ensuring that staff are well-equipped to answer customer questions and provide competent service. The study provides valuable insights into the service quality dimensions that influence customer satisfaction at a pub restaurant in Mamelodi. By addressing the identified areas of improvement and implementing the recommended strategies, the establishment can enhance its service quality, thereby boosting customer satisfaction and loyalty. These improvements are crucial for the economic resilience and growth of township economies, demonstrating the vital role of quality service delivery in achieving business success. This study not only highlights the current strengths and weaknesses of the pub restaurant's service quality but also offers practical recommendations for improvement. By focusing on enhancing staff presentation, responsiveness, and empathy and by leveraging socio-demographic insights, the establishment can create a more satisfying customer experience, ultimately contributing to the socio-economic upliftment of the township community.

Conclusion and recommendations

The fundamental objective of this investigation was to assess customer perceptions towards the service quality offered by a selected pub restaurant in Mamelodi. The study utilised descriptive statistical techniques to calculate mean values for various aspects of service quality, which effectively illustrated the participants' perspectives on the distinct attributes of the establishment in question. Ratings were assigned on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction. Participants rated the establishment's contemporary amenities, aesthetic appeal, and flexible operating hours highly, with mean scores of 5.73, 5.78, and 6.03, respectively. However, aspects such as staff presentation and the visual appeal of restaurant literature received lower scores (4.88 and 4.90, respectively), pointing towards areas for potential improvement. The overall service quality was given a mean score of 5.427, suggesting room for enhancement. The SERVPERF model's five dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—were employed to further dissect the participants' perceptions. Tangibility received a mean score of 5.320, indicating that while the establishment's physical elements were moderately praised, enhancements in staff attire and literature could prove beneficial. Reliability was rated at 5.393, showing moderate satisfaction with the consistency of the service, although occasional discrepancies were noted. Responsiveness had a score of 5.418, reflecting a generally satisfactory but sometimes slow service. Assurance was rated at 5.463, with staff generally perceived as knowledgeable and respectful, instilling confidence in patrons. Empathy received the highest score of 5.542, suggesting that while operating hours were appreciated, there was scope for more personalised service. Additionally, the study sought to explore the demographic characteristics of the pub's patrons and their relation to service quality perceptions. The demographic analysis provided insights into the patrons' age, education, employment status, and reasons for visiting the establishment, revealing significant associations between customer education and perceptions of tangibility and responsiveness. This demographic profiling indicates that the pub restaurant could refine its service delivery to cater more effectively to the diverse needs of its clientele, leveraging these insights to foster a more satisfying customer experience.

References

- Aldrich, J. O. (2018). *Using IBM SPSS Statistics: An Interactive Hands-on Approach*. SAGE Publications.
- Botha, C. (2017). The Impact of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty in the Hospitality Industry. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 6(4), 1–14.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Business Tech Africa. (2021, June 1). R700 Million Allocated to SA Township Entrepreneurs: Here's How You Can Claim. Available at <https://www.businesstechafrica.co.za/entrepreneurship/2021/06/01/r700-million-allocated-to-sa-township-entrepreneurs-heres-how-you-can-claim/> [Retrieved June 12, 2024].
- Bvuma, S. & Marnewick, C. (2021). Sustainable Livelihoods of Township Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises Towards Growth and Development. *Sustainability*, 12(83149).
- Charman, A., Petersen, L. & Piper, L. (2012). From Local Survivalism to Foreign Entrepreneurship: The Transformation of the Spaza Sector in Delft, Cape Town. *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 78(1), 47–73.
- Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cronin, J. J. & Taylor, S. A. (1992). Measuring Service Quality: A Re-examination and Extension. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(3), 55–68.
- Daily Maverick. (2022). Township Economic Development Bill is a Game Changer in Gauteng. Available at <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2022-04-04-township-economic-development-bill-is-a-game-changer-for-the-economic-geography-of-gauteng/> [Retrieved April 4, 2022].



- Edlins, M. & Dolamore, S. (2018). Ready to Serve the Public? The Role of Empathy in Public Service Education Programs. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 24, 300–320.
- Eresia-Eke, C. E., Milongo, G. & Mogotsi, N. B. (2020). Perceptions of Service Quality Dimensions and Patronage of Street Food Vendors in South African Townships. *The Retail and Marketing Review*, 16(1), 100–1121.
- Forbes Africa. (2021). South Africa's Townships: The Economy that Never Sleeps. Available at <https://www.forbesafrica.com/economy/2021/12/22/township-economies-the-economy-that-never-sleeps/> [Retrieved August 2, 2024].
- Getty, J. M. & Thompson, K. N. (1994). A Procedure for Scaling Perceptions of Lodging Quality. *Hospitality Research Journal*, 18(2), 75–96.
- Gauteng Provincial Government. (2019). Gauteng Government gets Additional Budget to Foster Economic Growth. Available at <https://www.gauteng.gov.za/News/NewsDetails/259BCACB-2212-4F90-9037-0DD5A964B824> [Retrieved July 19, 2024].
- Gauteng Provincial Government. (2022). Gauteng Township Economic Development Act. Available at <https://www.gauteng.gov.za/Departments/DepartmentPublicationDetails/%7B908A2656-B269-4AA9-AD28-6C691A41C04B%7D?departmentId=CPM-001003> [Retrieved July 19, 2024].
- Guliwe, T. & Bulelwa, M. (2023). Strategic Preferential Procurement Policy for Localisation and Inclusive Growth for Micro Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Gauteng Province. *Regional Economic Development Research*, 4(2), 706.
- Hart, L. (2024). Revitalising Township Economies: Innovation, Inclusion, and Impact. *South African Business Integrator*. Available at <https://sabusinessintegrator.co.za/economic-growth/revitalising-township-economies-innovation-inclusion-and-impact/> [Retrieved June 8, 2024].
- Heer, B. (2018). The Rise and Rise of the Township Economy. *News24*. Available at <https://www.news24.com/news24/PartnerContent/the-rise-and-rise-of-the-township-economy-20230621> [Retrieved June 12, 2024].
- Johns, N. (1992). Quality Management in the Hospitality Industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 11(4), 243–258.
- Kataoka, H., Iwase, T., Ogawa, H., Mahmood, S., Sato, M., DeSantis, J., Hojat, M. & Gonnella, J. (2019). Can Communication Skills Training Improve Empathy? A Six-year Longitudinal Study of Medical Students in Japan. *Medical Teacher*, 41, 195–200.
- Kundi, G. M., Khan, M. S., Qureshi, Q., Khan, Y. & Akhtar, R. (2014). Impact of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction in Higher Education Institutions. *Industrial Engineering Letters*, 4, 23–28.
- Labita, N. G. D. & Prado, N. I. (2021). Quality Service, Customer Satisfaction, and Performance of Non-academic Offices. *Asian Journal of Business and Governance*. Available at <https://consensus.app/papers/quality-service-customer-satisfaction-performance-labita/> [Retrieved June 4, 2024].
- Law Library. (2022). Gauteng Township Economic Development Act, 2022. *Law Library*.
- Lewis, B. R. (1993). Service Quality: Recent Developments in Financial Services. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 11(6), 19–25.
- Mazwai, T. (2019). The Township Economy: A Silver Bullet for Economic Development and Transformation. *Journal of Public Administration*, 54(3), 1–12.
- Msimango-Galawe, J. (2022). The Impact of Business Development Support Training on Youth Entrepreneurship Success in South Africa: A Case Study of the Gauteng Province. *Journal of Entrepreneurial Innovations*, 2(1), 94–101.
- Mncube, A. S., Sukdeo, N. & Mukwakungu, S. C. (2023). Enhancing Service Quality: A Total Quality Management Approach in a South African Company. *2023 IEEE International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Engineering Management (IEEM)*, 1768(4), 1768–1772.
- Mtati, M. (2023). The 2023 Township CX Report Announces Insights. *Media Update*.
- Muzekenyi, M., Zuwarimwe, J. & Kilonzo, B. M. (2023). Economic Challenges Limiting Small-Scale Commercial Farming Development in Rural Areas of South Africa. *African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development*. Available at <https://consensus.app/papers/challenges-limiting-farming-development-areas-south-muzekenyi/> [Retrieved August 8, 2024].
- Nethengwe, T., Nengovhela, M. & Shambare, R. (2018). Perception of Service Quality: Voices of Guests and Lodge Managers in Vhembe District Municipality of South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 7(1), 1-15.
- Ngwenya, P. & Zikhali, P. (2018). Revitalizing Gauteng City-Region Township Economies Through Value Chain Development. In A. Rogerson & C. M. Rogerson (Eds.). *The Changing Space Economy of City-Regions: The Gauteng City-Region, South Africa*, 241–273.
- Nicolaidis, A. (2012). Service Quality, Empowerment and Ethics in the South African Hospitality and Tourism Industry and the Road Ahead Using ISO9000/1. *African Journal of Business Management*, 6(13), 4759–4772.
- Nicolaidis, A. (2023). Service Quality and Its Influence on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty in Restaurants. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 11(6), 2173-2189.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A. & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40.
- Rogerson, C. M. & Rogerson, J. M. (2017). City Tourism in South Africa: Diversity and Change. *Tourism Review International*, 21(2), 193–211.
- Roberson, J. R. (2014). Developing a Grading System for Restaurants in South Africa (D Tech Thesis). *Tshwane University of Technology*.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research Methods for Business Students* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Scheba, A. & Turok, I. (2020). Strengthening Township Economies in South Africa: The Case for Better Regulation and Policy Innovation. *Urban Forum*, 31(1), 77–94.
- Simelane, S. (2023). Customer Service and Its Impact on Business Profitability. *FATE Foundation*. Available at <https://fatefoundation.org/customer-service-impact-business-profitability/> [Retrieved July 20, 2024].
- SLF. (2016). Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation: Township Micro-enterprise Development Study. Available at <https://www.livelihoods.org.za> [Retrieved July 18, 2024].
- Stats SA. (2024). Quarterly Labour Force Survey - Q1: 2024. Available at <https://www.statssa.gov.za> [Retrieved September 4, 2024].
- Wiid, J. A. & Cant, M. C. (2021). Obstacles Faced by Owners of Township Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises to Acquire Funds for Survival and Growth (2010–2020). *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 9(1), 52.
- World Bank Group. (2014). The Economics of South African Townships: Special Focus on Diepsloot. *World Bank Group*. Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southafrica/publication/the-economics-of-south-african-townships-special-focus-on-diepsloot> [Retrieved June 20, 2024].
- Wu, T. W. & Kim, D. Y. (2014). Menu Board Design at Quick Service Restaurant to Enhance Customer Satisfaction. *Journal of Design Development*, 14, 33–42.
- Unuvar, G. & Kaya, N. (2016). The Impact of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction, Loyalty, and Intention to Revisit: A study on Turkish Hospitality Industry. *International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Systems*, 9(1), 1–16.